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A
LETTER
TO THE
REFORMERS.



A

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REFORMERS.



BY

H. R. YORKE, Esq.



VÆ VICTIS.



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1798.



A

LETTER

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COUNTRYMEN AND FELLOW SUBJECTS!

IN the beginning of the month of July, I addressed the people at large, on the condition and future prospects of our country: but had it been possible for me to have foreseen the rapid succession of alarming events, which has happened since that time, I should not have submitted the contents of that pamphlet, in the shape it then assumed, to the public judgment. For, it is the height of imprudence
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and impolicy, to agitate the country, at a juncture when every force should be collected in its defence. However, if the arguments which I advanced therein on the subject of unanimity were *then* just, they are more so *at this time*, when we are menaced from without by an enterprizing and ambitious enemy,

The sentiments which are contained in the following sheets, I address particularly to *You*, because it is now in your power to be of essential service or of signal injury to your country. Their object is, to put you into the way of reasoning dispassionately on the state of our affairs, and to guard you against the mischiefs which may result from making false judgments upon them. In doing this, it will not be required of me to enter minutely into all the circumstances which may facilitate your determinations, but merely to point out such general outlines, as may suffice for your own minds to work upon. And as it is my wish that my sentiments may be known among that description of you, who
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have been egregiously misled by the artifices of demagogues, or by the fatal misapprehension and enthusiasm of men like myself; I have taken care to unfold them with all that plainness, simplicity, and regard to truth, which your situation and my wishes conspire to demand. If you will trouble yourselves to read these few pages with the same hearty desire to be informed, as their author feels to inform you, we shall not repent of our mutual attention. Many of your prejudices will be dissipated, as mine have been, and I shall enjoy the singular satisfaction of serving my country, while I contribute in an humble sphere, to enlighten the abused minds of those, whose numbers are respectable, but whose errors I fear are dangerous.

It was a shrewd remark of Machiavel, that *it is in the power of any man to begin a war, but not to end one when he pleases*. This truth was never more fully confirmed than in the present state of our country; a state, that requires
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from *you* in particular, the most elevated patriotism and magnanimity, if you aspire to render yourselves commendable in the eyes of God and Man. For your parent country, your constitution, property, and liberties are now menaced by an enemy, flushed with conquest, yet subtle in contrivance and dexterous in management, prone to cruelty and regardless of any tie either of morality or religion.

I hope I shall not be considered as a libeller of human nature, when I assert, that a nation, after five years of severe warfare, may be brought into a predicament so delicate, as to be *forced*, by way of safety, to continue the war (from whatever motives it originated) with unexampled energy. To those who sincerely love peace and mankind, and who are more desirous of being distinguished as good subjects, than as the alternate tyrants and slaves of a military democracy, it is matter of humiliation and regret, that the wild and absurd conduct of the French, should place Great Britain into such an alternative,

native, as either to abandon her independence for ever, or to maintain it by force of arms. If I have any knowledge of my own heart, I can assert with great truth, that there lives not a man, who desires more than myself, to see France compose herself, and enjoy an undisturbed peace, under the guardian protection of religion, liberty, and law. In entertaining this wish, I am conscious that I have not departed from my duty as an Englishman, because an enlightened experience has discovered to nations, that the happiness of one people so far from being contrary to, is promotive of, the happiness of its neighbours ; and hence a rivalry in commerce, arts, sciences, and all the peaceful virtues, has a direct tendency to expand the human mind, and to improve the condition of man. If however, this hope be frustrated, the fault must be ascribed to the French, not to us, as I shall presently prove ; and if I establish this position, one great cause of the support which has been afforded them, will be removed. In other words, if I make it appear that the French
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are not at this time contending for their liberties and independence, but on the contrary are aiming continual blows against the liberties and independence of other nations, and especially against England; if I prove that they are animated by a flagitious ambition, to prosper which they violate all the rules of morality, and estimate fraud, perfidy and vice only in proportion to their magnitude—if I prove that the French people are at this instant the most abandoned slaves in the world, and are fighting to establish a similar slavery among every other people—then I presume, You who call yourselves friends to liberty, morality and law, will feel yourselves interested in repelling their hostile aggression, in contributing beyond all others towards the defence of the state; because in so doing, You will immediately contribute to your own defence, as well as to that of your wives and children, and remotely to that of your distant posterity.

You will also wipe away that inglorious stain upon your character, of cramping the measures
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of government abroad, and of promoting the cause of the French at home. If indeed your efforts be confined to the mere removal of this hateful blot, you will have atchieved an useful and a noble purpose.

Now in order to make good my assertions, as well as to undeceive your minds, it will be necessary for me to expose briefly the genius of French policy throughout its destructive progress; to mark its occasional departures from, and its returns to its determined orbit, and then to draw such inferences from the consideration of this subject, as immediately concern you. By these means, you will be enabled to view with more certainty the course you are pursuing, and the frightful abyss into which you will inevitably be precipitated, if you suffer French principles to make any further progress among you, or if you harbour any of those visionary projects, by which the cause of French liberty has been blasted in every quarter of the globe.

When the French revolution broke out, there were thousands of virtuous men in this country who rejoiced in the event; and by anticipating (too hastily perhaps) its future effects on the happiness of nations, they considered it as a new æra in the moral state of man. They fancied that they perceived the probable extinction of those ruinous wars, which the ambition of the French court had excited to disturb our prosperity, to curtail our commercial eminence, and to waste our national strength. In this view of that great event, tho' their conclusions were false, their applause was well meant and honourable to their humanity. Others however, of a severer and perhaps of a more penetrating cast, attributed all its revolutionary movements to a preconcerted system, engrafted on fallacious principles for the purpose of arming the governed against their governors, of separating the people from their magistrates, of exciting them to hostility against ancient forms of authority, in order the more effectually to establish a scheme of universal empire, of which Paris was to be the Capital.

tal. The former, it is evident, looked upon France, as they wished France *should be*, and they ascribed to the French legislators a character of innocence, and a disposition to virtue; which a most melancholy experience has since proved they did not possess, and which seems to justify in a great measure the predictions of their opponents.

That France had a right to modify the rigor of her administration, or even to simplify the forms of her polity, no one will deny, provided those changes could be effected without interrupting the social harmony of surrounding nations. But there is a vast distinction between the reformation of a state, with the defence of that state undergoing such an operation, and an avowed design to push by force of arms, those reforms into other states, which however proper for the one, might be pernicious to the others. On this subject, all public lawyers are agreed; and this was the predicament in which we found the French nation at the commencement

ment of the war. A circumstance which has no doubt contributed to encourage those, who wished to check the progress of the French Revolution, and to whom therefore it afforded a ground of honest action at least, if it be admitted that they were mistaken in their principles.

It is however of no consequence to investigate at this time, any question of the kind. It is enough for my purpose to take France *as it is*, observing before I proceed, that tho' the French government affected to deny their former design against established governments, they have since substantially realized the suspicions formed against them, by revolutionizing every country which they have conquered since that declaration was issued.

You cannot too often recollect that the exotic plant of French liberty (and I call it so, in contradistinction to rational freedom) was admired and received by us, neither with sobriety nor prudence.

prudence. This foolish intoxication, added to the other evils of that day, furnished cogent arguments for the continuation of the war.

I am apprehensive that the brilliant victories which the French have gained on the continent, have dazzled your eyes, and induced you to conclude from this exterior, that their internal system is as just, as their foreign system has been successful. But this is a false mode of reasoning. The French people have reason to regret every step which their armies have taken beyond their own frontiers ; their resources and comforts must be proportionably diminished, and their future means dissipated by inordinate speculations on property, raised to answer the contingency of the moment. And notwithstanding the vanity of the Frenchman, the acquisition of every victory, however it may elevate his hopes for the moment, cannot give bread to the starving peasant or mechanic. To judge of the happiness of any people, we should view them in all the conditions of society, from the
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palace to the cottage, not in the splendid apparatus of armies. If you will take the trouble to do this, you will find the lot of the English peasant or mechanic, to be prosperity itself when compared to that of a Frenchman; whose subsistence is most scanty amid the wreck of arts, manufactures, the suspension of trade and commerce, and the noise of arms. Amidst all the triumphs of Lewis XIV. he found his country depopulated, and his people wretched. Rational freedom has nothing to do with the French cause, for as I before stated, they are fighting to establish universal despotism of the worst and most abhorrent species. Besides, all history shews that foreign war has often been resorted to by republics to retard or allay domestic cabals. The evil day, however is only postponed. The passions of men will burst forth sooner or later, and the suspension of the blow, only aggravates its weight, and prepares it to fall with heavier vengeance on the generation it smites.

The French, in their national vanity, derided

ded not only the English form of government, as well as the policy of the best regulated communities, but they likewise despised what they might have obtained from their own. For they *had* a constitution and a good one too, capable of combining the repressive energy of government, with the strongest cements of public liberty.† The old Constitution of France was on the same plan as the Constitution of England; and all the Gothic establishments were raised on the same principles, tho' from local and other circumstances, there were some shades of difference between them. Successful usurpations have wrested from most of those countries the inheritance of their progenitors, tho' the traces of their legislation have been preserved. If England preserved and improved her constitution, it must be ascribed to the virtues of her people, to the profit she derived from the lessons of experience, and from the dangers of intemperate innovations. If France disdained to ransack her records, and to trace out the lineaments of a free

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† See Hottoman's *Franco-Gallia*, and Boulainvilliers.

government from amongst the rubbish of time, it must be ascribed to the vanity of her legislators, acting upon the vices of her people. They improvidently launched the vessel of the state on an unexplored ocean, and they have made shipwreck. The wrong application of general principles, has been the source of all their calamities.

For above two hundred years, this numerous people had been cut off from all share in the public councils of their country; and bowed down under the two-fold yoke of an arbitrary government and of a corrupted religion, they gave themselves up to a frivolity of character, and to a general dissipation of manners. These are the necessary consequences of mental indolence, and timid servility. Notwithstanding this universal abandonment, genius forced its way through all the obstacles opposed to it, and tho' it was too often prostituted to adulation, it illustrated France both in arts and arms. The glory of the *Grand Monarch*, was the object of
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French prowess, and its greatest reward. But, on the introduction of the new order of things, a great revolution took place in the modes of thinking. That same nation which had been heretofore noted for its fervile attachment to the King, the church, and the ladies, exchanged its loyalty, religion, and gallantry, for the savagery of democracy, the petrified coldness of irreligion, and the insolence of an unbridled licentiousness. Such have been the sudden and extensive influence of moral causes on national character. To many this change appeared permanent; but after what I have seen of it, I can safely affirm, that it was only the translation of certain weak principles to a more vigorous and athletic soil. The national character remains in all its mischievous lustre, tho' its object is changed. No political revolution can possibly eradicate pretensions so long established. From quitting one extreme, they have plunged into another, and under a different name (as I shall presently shew) they still retained the idea of being the first of all nations; and rather than abandon it, they have

resolved to enforce the most singular and absurd institutions, and even to separate themselves from the rest of Europe, by the peculiarities of their habits. Thus the ambition of one man, Lewis XIV. has been transplanted into the bosom of every Frenchman, and is again revived as a national characteristic. Thus they affect to listen with pleasure to propositions of peace, because they gratify their vanity, while they inspire their hopes, and feed their ambition. In the offers of peace, they imagine they behold the debility of their enemies; in the denial of them, they fancy they display their power. Their real object, is obviously to subjugate their enemies in succession, and to plunder them when subjugated.

If any proofs be necessary in support of this assertion, I will refer you to their solemn declarations, their constitutional codes, their manifestoes on the one side, and to their repeated perjuries, violent decisions, and unexampled cruelties, on the other. For instance; they protested in the presence of God and the world, that
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they renounced all conquests, that their only triumphs should be those of philosophy ; that instead of the luxury of courts, they would establish liberty and equality ; in the place of a persecuting superstition, universal tolerance, of individual will, general law ; of literary fervility, unqualified liberty of opinion ; of feudal oppressions, the removal of many physical evils ; of ignorance, the institution of a national education, which should redeem the human race from error, and advance the improvement of their intellectual powers and moral sentiments. All this they solemnly promised, but have fulfilled in no one instance. You however gave credit to the benevolent design, because it was plausible, and so did I. Mark how they have performed their promises. Instead of renouncing all conquests, they have not only subjugated, but they have plundered Savoy, Italy, Holland, the Austrian Netherlands, and all the territory situated between their ancient frontier and the banks of the Rhine, which, with magnificent folly, they have appropriated as their boundary,

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in defiance of reason, justice, and military experience. The triumphs of their philosophy, consisted in the legalized murder or banishment of every man who was distinguished for literary eminence, and who took no part in their sanguinary measures; the black catalogue of whose names, are as appalling to the philosopher, as they must be disgusting to You. For liberty and equality, they have permitted the licentious freedom of a few hundred tyrants, who are the offals of human nature; and such as the lowest of the people brought into play according to the downward progression of civil commotion. For universal tolerance, they have martyred, imprisoned, or banished most exemplary characters, because they gave testimony of that faith which is in them; so that an Algerine pirate or an Atheist is certain of toleration and countenance there, when a Christian finds none. For general law, they have established the discipline of the bayonet, and the sanguinary codes of general proscription. For unqualified liberty of opinion, they imprison or banish every man who dares to
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speak against the government, and they have appointed a licensor to the public papers, the only vehicles of public opinion and intelligence. For the removal of many physical evils, they have entailed poverty, the greatest of evils on their passive slaves; and for national education and the improvement of the human intellect, they have discountenanced all religion, proscribed its teachers, driven men of true knowledge either into banishment or silence; and with a mockery of all sense, have instituted Pagan Ceremonies, wherein the most bombast rant and sustenance are delivered from their chief Magistrates, and the people embruted, are taught to be satisfied like the servile Romans with panem & circenses, bread and puppet shews.

These are not the idle assertions of a distempered imagination, but are positive truths, which I have deduced from their own papers, and from many private circumstances equally important, if my health and leisure would at this time permit me to disclose them. If You
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have made use of your own eyes, you cannot fail to have received a similar conviction. Would to God, these assertions were untrue, or that you and I had considered them with unprejudiced minds before now. I have made and still make great allowances for the peculiar circumstances, and unexampled struggles of the French. But it is impossible to belye facts, or to defend a regular system of disciplined immorality. You will therefore reject as I do, that silly cant which has long prevailed of attributing to English gold, and to the intrigues of our government the hideous crimes of the French. And even if you should allow it, you will reduce yourselves to a more deplorable predicament than otherwise, inasmuch as you must admit, that a people who could be so generally acted upon, must be the most profligate wretches upon earth, and as unfit to take the lead in the reformation of mankind, as a prostitute at a baptism.

If any nation were fitted by nature to effect

a political change, it was England ; because its insular situation separates it in such a manner from the rest of Europe, that in newmodelling or restoring its primitive institutions, it could give no immediate cause of alarm to surrounding nations. Accordingly, our forefathers at the time of the revolution, profited by this circumstance, and raised up a grand political edifice without noise and convulsion. But what is most to be admired in their conduct, is, that they affected no visionary schemes of speculative perfection. Then indeed was the opportunity for their introduction, had they found them practicable. But with a wisdom and sobriety that can never be too much extolled, they contented themselves with the removal of the evils which afflicted the state, but left the constitution itself untouched. They demanded the execution of the laws, and the purity of the Constitution, and conscious that these were enough for all the purposes of society, they left the rights of man to flow from those laws as

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neceffary confequences, and to their pofterity the facred office of guarding them unblemifhed. Nor muft you imagine that our legiflators were not enlightened in thofe days, and that the people were ftupid. No ! there lived in England a conftellation of great men and philofophers, who were at leaft as well acquainted with the genius of republican inftitutions, as the French pretend to be. There lived alfo many men who remembered the times of the republic, and who had taken an active fhare in its concerns. Yet did they all agree in preferving the ancient frame of our government, tho' they had juft caufe to be incenfed with the manner in which it had been violated. Nor were the common people backward in promoting the voice of genuine philofophy. What had been fanctioned by Locke, by Newton, by Reafon, they defended with their arms, and upheld with their beft blood. They have tranfmitted a noble inheritance to their pofterity, which I hope they will never bafely forfeit. Immortal fhades ! continue to watch over and animate the councils

cils of your descendants !*

Whoever has been in the habit of making observations on the state of civil society, cannot avoid noticing the discordant opinions which are entertained on almost every subject that presents itself to our consideration. This diversity of sentiment is not confined to abstract questions of philosophy and metaphysics, but is extended to those practical points, whose determination, it might be imagined, would be easily obtained from a sense of interest, and from the habitual exercise of that knowledge, which results from general experience. But the contrary is the fact. The views in which the same things present themselves to different minds, are so contradictory; that subjects of commerce, and civil polity have been, and will be debated with zeal, and often with intemper-

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* It may be justly said that this temperate and wise conduct has contributed to enlighten our policy, and to acquire us the admiration of the Good in all countries. "The English, says Montesquieu, know better than any other people upon earth, how to value, at the same time, these three great advantages, religion, commerce, and liberty.

ance by men of excellent judgment, and of upright dispositions. This circumstance should check that presumptuous confidence in our own conclusions, by which we exclude the sober judgments of other men who dissent from our way of thinking. The greater part of the misfortunes of France, must be ascribed to this inconsiderate and inflated vanity ; and therefore it is my duty to warn you against the encouragement of it.

The shortighted legislators of France, have plunged themselves into the same errors as their ancient government, altho' they are perpetually declaiming against vague and useless laws. Altho' they have established the principle, that laws are the result of the general will, yet they scruple not to disregard this source, when it is found to incommode the purposes of ambition. Thus, we have another instance of the falsification of general principles, when they are to be applied to practice. Laws are doubtless made by opinion, if they are intended to be permanent. But
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the Executive Directory, have assumed to themselves the initiative character of legislation ; and instead of strictly abiding by the spirit and letter of their new Constitution, they have presumed to *propose* laws for the acceptance of those, whose office it is to make them. The fate of those who dare to refuse a servile compliance to their mandates, is well known. Thus, the two powers of the state, the one to frame and the other to execute laws, are absorbed in the hands of five persons, who certainly are not to be compared with the Roman tribunes, either in the mildness or decency of their propositions.

Under the idea of renouncing vague laws, the French legislature, have established the most contradictory and pernicious that ever were known among civilized communities. What is true and just to day, is false and wicked to-morrow ; and the rage for law-making has increased with such rapidity, that we may safely apply to them, what one of their modern philosophers said of old France, that a man in his
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own country often changes laws in changing post horses. This is not because they are made by men; for geometry, an human invention, is absolutely true in all its parts; experimental philosophy is true; even the first metaphysical principles on which geometry is founded, are incontestably true and unalterable. If therefore the modern laws of France be absurd and faulty, it is because they have in general, been made in transient exigencies; like medicaments administered at random, curing one person, and afterwards killing many others. But we might forgive them, from a sense of pity, these fooleries, if they did not openly advance their pretensions of carrying them into other countries. To every rational mind, however, the introduction of an universal scheme of legislation in the present state of society, must appear to be both an idle and a vicious project. And independently of this consideration, it should be observed that the varieties of national institutions have a greater tendency to meliorate the condition of mankind, than this absurd notion of universal govern-

government; which, by affording no opportunity of competition, must leave the world to the consequences of a good or bad system, without the prospect of any effectual redress. But the rivalry of nations, begets a liberal spirit of national emulation; brings into action the latent powers of the mind; and furnishes eventually to the conveniencies and elegancies of civil life. Besides, it accustoms men to the habit of thinking; and by presenting to their senses a detail of original facts, which they may at leisure combine into general principles; enables them without risk and peril, to deduce institutions of civil wisdom, from the just or erroneous regulations of ancient and modern times. What is just or unjust? What constitutes the happiness or misery of nations? What in their various situations is favourable or adverse to their good qualities? What is the highest point of felicity to which communities may aspire? — are all questions of the greatest importance, and are to be derived from those materials with which we are furnished by the lights of history. The love of novelty
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and system, has notwithstanding, prompted ardent imaginations, to reject this mode of reasoning, and to wander in the boundless regions of chimæra. A few particulars in the character of the individual, are deemed sufficient arguments to establish a general theory for the whole species; and the foundations of ancient authority are attacked, under the fantastic and plausible notion of rendering man a perfect being. Without regard to his previous education, his habits, and even his prejudices, he is called upon to relinquish the enjoyment of benefits, for the possible attainment of a contingent, and at best, a precarious happiness. Judging of man by what *he ought to be*, instead of *what he is*, and what he *has been*; they loosen the bonds of social union for the sake of obtaining this imaginary state. But too late they discover that the animal which was supposed to be of a nature so docile, and fitted to perfectibility, is no sooner forced into this condition, than he unfolds all the wild and outrageous passions, which a long experience had found it necessary to restrain by
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penal sanctions. In the universal uproar which succeeds the reign of laws, the abettors of such a system, awaken from their delirium, and retire with affright from the monster which they have raised. But the repentance of the Utopian artists comes too late; the tumult of passions are not so easily assuaged; and they are doomed to be mortified spectators, perhaps victims, of a howling storm, which they perceive it is easier to set in motion, than to appease. I speak feelingly.

The causes of these evils originate chiefly in a total disregard of the admonitions of experience. Too great a confidence in the natural powers of man, has conducted modern politicians to that wild deification of the human mind, which has cost so much blood and tears in a neighbouring country. The faculties of mind, cultivated in the noble pensiveness of philosophy, or nurtured in the still bower of academic retirement, are calculated to sublime the human character, and even to meliorate, in

a certain degree, the lot of man. But to the mass of society, the opportunity is wanting for similar acquirements; and perhaps, the wise dispensations of Providence, have so ordered our affairs; for in this compulsory state, all the distinctions among men would be confounded, and they would be left to perish by the very means that were contrived for their preservation. No rational liberty could exist, because (liberty and happiness being correlative terms) happiness can never be attained when our allotted station is corrupted; when every man is removed from his accustomed sphere of action; when the philosopher must become a mechanic, and the mechanic affect the philosopher. The lustre which the latter casts around him is from an eminence; but that light by which he is illuminated, and with which he enlightens his countrymen, would consume the unlettered, if brought to converge suddenly upon them. The actions of the *many* must be circumscribed, in proportion to their thoughts; the chief object, therefore, of a benevolent legislator, should be, to let every
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man continue to remain in his proper destination with as little interruption as possible; to impress on his mind that it is the interest of government to make him happy, and to pursue such measures as will convince him that he is so. On this ground, the knowledge of duties arises in its proper course, and the mind under no temptation to revolt, never troubles itself with the idea of claims and rights, which it would be injurious to fabricate, and dangerous to assert. The peculiar advantage of such a legislation consists in this; that it discards fancy, and operates only on demonstration.

Throughout the history of the human race, it will be found that there are elementary truths, common to all nations and to all men. The situation to which every active being is formed, is the true ground on which we are to analyze the history of the human species. Particular experiments, which are absolutely necessary in the elucidation or establishment of the principles of other sciences, can never be applied to man,

when he appears in a forced or uncommon condition. The state of man is peculiar to himself; there is no analogy between his nature and that of other animals. If we would collect the properties of his species, we must take the whole race, as they ever have been, assembled in bodies; we must attend to their universal qualities, examine the course of human life, and the tenour of human conduct. From those primary truths, we shall then find that he is susceptible of improvement, and possesses within himself an inherent principle of progression. History throughout exhibits mankind in this state; ever acting under the desire of perfection without attaining it. The neglect or perversion of these truths, have caused those despotic forms of government with which the gloomy page of history is pregnant. That such forms should long continue in an age fertile with innovations, was not to be expected. The ignominy of servitude is felt, but the best mode of redress is a subject of polemical controversy. To revolt against injustice, to ascertain the boundaries of right and duty, to reclaim

claim the dignity which was originally delegated to man by his Creator, are generous offices of patriotism; but to adjust the differences which arise between subverted oppression, and newly recovered liberties; to describe the line of demarcation how far we are to go, and where to stop; when to advance our projects, and when to recede from them; are objects that require the exercise of the most disinterested virtue, added to the most consummate wisdom. The principles which predominate in the mind of the subject result from a sense of duty, and from ideas of subordination. They are so deeply rooted in the modes of thinking from the influence of early habits, that they may be justly regarded as important branches of moral obligation. To destroy them, or even to shake their stability, is to poison the fountains of jurisprudence, and to annihilate every notion of security which arises from the mutual wants and assistances of men, and from the *power* of society. Man therefore, loosened from the restraints of law, is a savage—acting under the prepossession of being his own
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legislator, he is a slave, and of the lowest order, because he is mocked with the honour of providing the rod with which he is scourged. In the examination of every other question, men resort to facts and observation ; alas ! it is only in what relates to themselves, and in matters the most important, that they substitute hypothesis instead of reality, and confound the provinces of imagination and reason, of poetry and science. It is a truth, that ought constantly to be in your recollections, that in all civilized communities men act more under the impulse of habit, than the guidance of reason, and therefore it is a measure of incalculable injury suddenly to withdraw the instrument of their impulses, and to commit them at once to the exercise of their own reason. For, in this case, as unhappy France has proved, every man springs up at once as a legislator, conceives he has the right and the capacity, not for his equitable portion of freedom, but for office, power, emolument, and dominion. A general phrenzy ensues which none can remove; which adventurers im-
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prove for temporary advantages ; and which, after ravaging the country by its violence, disposes it to bend under the yoke of military usurpation, or to return under the government it had contemptuously demolished.

I cannot too often impress on your minds, that the calamities of France, have been chiefly occasioned by the abuse of general principles. The law makers of that distracted Country, have reasoned too much *à priori* from the principles of human nature. Principles that result from an extensive examination of the human constitution, and of the general laws which regulate the course of human affairs, ought always to be weighed and considered by the legislator, because they are the fruits of a more extensive induction, than any of the inferences that can be drawn from the history of actual establishments. But I deprecate their practical application, because the peculiarities of the case are almost always overlooked. The worst form of government in its original, may by successive modifications, become not
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only tolerable, but good. In its progress it may assume the form of systematical arrangement, and bear evident marks of consistency. Wherever a government has existed for ages, and men have enjoyed tranquillity under it, it is a proof that its principles are not essentially at variance with each other. In the art of government, it is a much more difficult matter to refer effects to their causes, than in the mechanical art ; and therefore it rarely happens, even when we have an opportunity of seeing a political experiment made, that we can draw from it any certain inference, with respect to the justness of the principles by which it was suggested. The errors of the artist must necessarily become apparent in the last result ; but in the political system, the discovery of errors may come too late for remedy. God forbid, that I should draw any conclusions unfavourable to human liberty ! On the contrary, I conceive that a just appreciation of these sentiments, is the most likely method either to obtain, or to secure the freedom of mankind. The greater part of the plans proposed by modern
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jectors, proceed on what the logicians call *petitio principii*—on the supposition of a miraculous reformation in the moral character of the people. Mr. Hume has justly observed that all such plans, may be safely abandoned as impracticable and visionary. Of these plans, by far the greater number proceed on the supposition, that the social order is entirely the effect of human art; and that wherever this order is imperfect, the evil may be traced to some want of foresight on the part of the legislator, or to some inattention of the magistrate to the complicated structure of that machine whose movements he regulates. The projects of reform, therefore, which such plans involve, are, in general, well entitled to all the ridicule and contempt they have met with; inasmuch as they imply an arrogant and presumptuous belief in their authors, of the superiority of their own political sagacity, to the accumulated wisdom of former ages. To such men I address myself in the language of M. Condorcet one of the ablest partizans of theoretical systems. “If we attack op-

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pressors before we have taught the oppressed, we shall risk the loss of liberty, and rouse them to oppose the progress of reason. History affords proofs of this truth. How often, in spite of the efforts of the friends of freedom, has the event of a single battle reduced nations to the slavery of ages! And what is the kind of liberty enjoyed by those nations, which have recovered it by force of arms, and not by the influence of philosophy? Have not most of them confounded the forms of republicanism with the enjoyment of right, and the despotism of numbers with liberty? How many laws, contrary to the rights of nature, have dishonoured the code of every people which has recovered its freedom, during those ages in which reason was still in its infancy? Why not profit by this fatal experience, and wisely wait the progress of knowledge, in order to obtain freedom more effectual, more substantial, and more peaceful? Why pursue it by blood and inevitable confusion, and trust that to chance, which time must certainly, and without bloodshed, bestow? A fortunate struggle may, indeed

deed, relieve us of many grievances under which we labour at present, but if we wish to secure the perfection, and the permanence of freedom, we must patiently wait the period when men, emancipated from their prejudices, and guided by philosophy, shall be rendered worthy of liberty, by comprehending its claims."*

Altho' I have been demonstrating to you the folly and danger of the abuse of principles, I would not be supposed to be an advocate for the continuance of absurd institutions. It is a partial view only of government that produces indiscriminate zeal against established regulations,

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* En attaquant les oppresseurs avant d'avoir éclairé les citoyens, on risquera de perdre la liberté & d'étouffer la raison. L'histoire offre la preuve de cette vérité. Combien de fois, malgré les généreux efforts des amis de la liberté, une seule bataille n'a-telle pas réduit des nations à une servitude de plusieurs siècles ? De quelle liberté même ont joui les nations, qui l'ont recouvrée par la violence des armes, & non par la force de la raison ? D'une liberté passagère, & tellement troublée par des orages, qu'on peut presque douter qu'elle ait été pour elles un véritable avantage. Presque toutes n'ont-elles pas confondu les formes républicaines avec la jouissance de leurs droits, & la tyrannie de plusieurs avec la liberté ? Combien de lois injustes & contraires aux droits de la nature, ont déshonoré le code de toutes les nations.

in the same manner as a partial view of Christianity begets levity and theism. While we would cautiously avoid the one extreme, let us be careful that we do not fall into its opposite, and bring upon society the very evils we are anxious to prevent. The violent revolutions which, at different periods, have convulsed modern Europe, have arisen not from a spirit of innovation in sovereigns and statesmen; but from their bigoted attachment to antiquated forms, and to principles borrowed from less enlightened ages. It is this reverence for abuses which have been sanctioned by time, accompanied with an inattention to the progress of public opinion, which has, in most instances, blinded the rulers of mankind, till

tions qui ont recouvré leur liberté dans les siècles où la raison était encore dans l'enfance ! Pourquoi ne pas profiter de cette expérience funeste, & savoir attendre des progrès des lumières une liberté plus réelle, plus durable & plus paisible ? Pourquoi acheter par des torrens de sang, par des bouleversements inévitables, & livrer au hasard ce que le temps doit amener sûrement & sans sacrifice ? C'est pour être plus libre, c'est pour l'être toujours, qu'il faut attendre le moment où les hommes, affranchis de leurs préjugés, guidés par la raison, seront enfin dignes de l'être, parce qu'ils connaîtront les véritables droits de la liberté.

Vie de Voltaire par M. de Condorcet.

till government has lost all its efficiency; and till the rage of innovation has become too general and too violent, to be satisfied with changes, which if proposed at an earlier period, would have united, in the support of established institutions, every friend to order, and to the prosperity of his country.

From the recent conduct of the French, it is apparent, that the old principles of universal empire, influence their councils and actions. And their frontless avowal of them, induces me to look back a little into their more early designs. Thus, the same principle, tho' under a different direction, must have animated their former legislatures. For, tho' they affected (and doubtless many among them, meant sincerely what they said) to relinquish all offensive quarrels, and that ostentatious ambition with which they justly accused their old government, yet, this ambition obtruded itself on the world, under the less offensive title of *legislating for the whole human race*. The firelock was to be laid aside, but a
more

more potent engine of conquest was to be employed in its place, namely, the dominion of mind. The ill-understood names of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, were to resound through every corner of the earth, and serve as advanced posts of a desolating army. The French banner, or in other words, the bloody standard of insurrection was to be uplifted in every state, around which the idle, the profligate, the blasphemer, and the ignorant were to rally. If you have not yet felt the practical effects of these baleful doctrines, you owe it to that feagirt position in which nature has placed you.

The French have often declared in the most solemn manner, that they were contending only for the liberties and independence of their country, *not for the purposes of conquest*. I gave credit to their words, and sincerely wished them success. However, as long as the allies were in possession of their strong holds, or hovered on their frontiers, they cautiously and artfully concealed their ultimate policy. But when the
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distractions of the former led to discomfiture, their system began to develop itself, and in proportion as the confederates receded from, they advanced in their pretensions. Their views still enlarge with their successes. And now after having unjustly seized extensive continental territories, they grasp with insolent menace, at the possession of the trident. They baptise France by the title of the "*Great Nation*," and Britain by that of "*The Land of Pirates*." But assertions like these require proofs to substantiate them. What piracies have we committed on that vast empire, which our valour, our industry, our geographical site, have raised for us? Venice, Portugal, Spain, Holland, have successively enjoyed the empire of the main, but they have not been able to retain it. If after having wrested that power from them, by unexampled and continued acts of prowess, we have maintained, (and I hope ever shall maintain it) the transfer and enjoyment of the rights it gives must be ascribed to the circumstances which have been mentioned above. The sea
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is become our natural barrier, tho' I am far from considering it as our *only* bulwark of defence. We have exercised this dominion, with more moderation than any of those countries which formerly held it, and certainly with more than the French *would* do, if we may judge from their late decree respecting neutral vessels, and their conduct towards the people they have conquered.

Has Holland any reason to rejoice under the fraternal discipline of France? They entered that country *as brethren*; they have lived in it, *as commissaries*; and they will leave it (should that event ever take place) as Vandals. For they have already ruined the commerce, and dethroned the freedom of that learned, sober, and valiant people. In the proclamation which they issued, when they entered that country, they professed (as they always do) that they would respect the religion, the property, the manners and institutions of the Dutch. A declaration of so ingenuous and disinterested a nature, obtained them at least the full confidence
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of those who were disaffected to the Stadtholderate. But they had no sooner burrowed in their cities, and secured their arsenals, than the fraternal system began to explode. They demanded an immense contribution: it was granted, and the property of the poor, and even of the disaffected party, was seized in order to levy it. They proceeded next to demand clothing, pay, and subsistence for thirty thousand of their Janissaries, who were to be kept at the expence of the states, under the pretence of a defensive force, but in reality to awe the friends of rational freedom. This requisition was no sooner acquiesced in, than they resorted to a most despicable, low trick, which the most predatory highwayman would have scorned. They marched off to the banks of the Rhine in small divisions the greatest part of the thirty thousand, who had been provisioned, and poured in by stealth, an equal number of sturdy beggars, who were provided for in a similar manner. And this was repeated a third time. Thus, the first blessings of French Fraternity displayed the dark

features of perfidy, fraud, and plunder.

In the next place, after having trodden liberty under foot, they attempted to depose religion itself; for altho' they did not obtain a decree for the abolition of the Christian worship,* they authorized the most blasphemous and indecent publications against it, and hired men of letters to

* They attempted to introduce their infernal Idea that "*Death is an eternal Sleep.*" The proposition itself is an *Irricism*, for how can Sleep be eternal? Sleep is only repose or suspension of the mental powers (and that not always) and consequently *ex vi termini* implies fuscitation. You ought to know that their legislators are as devoid of learning, as of common sense. You hear them often refer to the exploits of the Greeks and Romans, but you must not infer from this circumstance that they are well versed in the language of either. A little smattering of Latin, they possess (I write generally) but of Greek they are absolutely ignorant. Abbé Barthelemi, the most erudite Grecian among them, they imprisoned a short time before his death, (*Vie de M. Barthelemi par M. de Nivernois*, a work that ought to be translated) and would have butchered, if shame had not compelled them to avow their *literary* obligations to him. In short, The Travels of Anacharsis, the histories of Rollin, Daciers Plutarch, and a few other translations make up the modern French lawmaker's antique library. From these sources chiefly they derive their *recondite* knowledge of ancient institutions!!! I hope I shall never live to see my countrymen deluded by any dissertations formed from such scanty morsels of knowledge. Genuine learning is modest; the impertinence

to prostitute their talents to this dishonourable purpose. Philosophy (O ! much abused name !) was the *pretence*, but plunder was the *motive*. They have seized and imprisoned the persons of those Dutchmen who remonstrated against their second *Septemberization*, and they have aggravated the injury by destroying their Printing Presses, and consequently depriving the unfortunate suf-

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tinence of lecturing or spouting on the history of nations whose language the orator does not comprehend, is insupportable. To understand the manners and habits of thinking of any people, we must recur to their laws ; and the laws of Greece and Rome are not to be acquired in the reading of a few translations, or in the labour of a day. It was long industry and painful application which made a Montesquieu, a Taylor, a Heineccius and a Jones. I would therefore advise such conceited coxcombs, to learn their syntax, before they presume to lecture on the causes of the decline of ancient Empires. We are *yet* a learned, and a religious people. Let us preserve our character. An horrid night of Vandal barbarism threatens to overspread the civilized world ; all true knowledge begins to be contemned ; and pert sophistry and tawdry eloquence usurp its place. When the Christian religion is driven from the earth, the profound learning and extensive research which are occasionally called forth in its defence, must inevitably follow it. May God avert these calamities from my country ! All Hell is yawning beneath us, and if union, determination and courage be not instantly summoned in our just defence, we shall fall into the merciless gulph, amid the rudest riot that ever scourged mankind.

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ferers of their future means of subsistence. And to complete their fraternal system, they dispatch a Jacobin emissary under the title of ambassador, to quicken the tardy pace of the phlegmatic Batavians, and to bring them à la hauteur de la revolution. Thus, have they falsified their manifestoes, and avoided any interference with the internal regulations of other countries! After having robbed, insulted, and impoverished a nation which from the famous treaty of Utrecht in 1579, justly boasted of its freedom and eminence; they proceeded to sap the fountains of order and

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But I have digressed. From what I have remarked of the learning of the French lawmakers, you will easily discover from what source, they *cribbed* the idea of "Eternal Sleep" which their ignorance has strangely misinterpreted. They resorted to the "*Eternal Mansions*," a name which the Egyptians gave to their sepulchral monuments, (Diod. Sicul. lib. 1. p. 47.) for their *Eternal Sleep*; it was not however in Diodorus they found it, but in Rollin. It will give pleasure to every religious mind when informed that the attempt to apostatize the Dutch not only failed, but produced a very general acknowledgment of the necessity and truths of religion. And this is not to be wondered at. Holland has produced in defence of Christianity most able and learned advocates. It does not acknowledge that religion through the corrupted channels of the Church of Rome, but through the purified streams of the Reformation. Recollect also, that it is the country of Grotius.

morality; to scatter the seeds of impiety; as if ashamed of their own crimes and follies, they strive to involve other countries in a similar load of guilt, in order that France may not stand alone to after ages, a signal monument of human depravity. Are these the men who accuse us of piracy?—these the worthies, who by their good example, and unexceptionable character, are entitled to talk of justice, humanity and freedom? *Their lips drop as an honey-comb and their mouths are smother than oil, but their end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword.*

If you contemplate their recent transactions at Venice, you will discover a complication of treacherous, oppressive, and avaricious cruelties. As this subject strikes home particularly to *your* bosoms, it merits all your attention. Under the *pretext* of avenging a violation of neutrality, they entered the Venetian territory, and instigated its people to throw off their ancient government, and to vindicate themselves unto Liberty and Equality. It is certain, that the Venetians,

netians in general abhorred the idea of French Fraternization, and therefore the French were not justified in *forcing* them to an action, which was repugnant to their inclinations. Had the Directory conducted themselves with any respect to justice, they ought to have first defined the injury, and then to have demanded reparation. Every government is responsible, to a certain degree, for the misconduct of its subjects, and therefore it ought to punish any infraction of the law of nations. But no punishment can take place, till the crime, and the criminals are known. The duty of the French, was therefore, to have avoided any interference with an independent government, until it had refused to comply with the demands of justice; which refusal, might properly be construed into an approbation of the misconduct of its subjects, and would therefore be tantamount to a declaration of hostilities. This case has repeatedly occurred in the history of modern nations and is even solemnly recognized by the English law, as well as by the laws of every European community.

nity. In conformity to these principles, the Venetian government *did require* of the French General to point out distinctly *how, when, and by whom* the alledged injuries were committed. The only answers they obtained, were vague assertions, and the notification of the march of the French troops into the territory of Venice. If we admit (which I am not inclined to do) that French stragglers *were* assassinated, and that the Venetian government, neglected to take cognizance of the matter, still this will not justify the conduct of the French. Because, according to this complexion of the case, when they resorted to force, it was merely to obtain satisfaction, and not to incite the people to revolt, or to subvert the government. When therefore they had made reprisals (which they did with a vengeance) or had obtained the desired satisfaction, they ought to have withdrawn their forces. But the views of the Directory were very opposite; and the murder of a dozen or of twelve thousand Frenchmen would not have made any difference in their projects. The preliminaries

limaries at Leoben had been signed, and the French were under the necessity of looking about them, to find out some object wherewith to compensate the Emperor, for the loss of the Austrian Netherlands and his Italian dominions, and for retaining in their hands, the strong fortrefs of Mantua, which (to use a vulgar phrase) had become the bone of contention between them. Venice therefore was singled out as the most convenient subject for hush-money and the manner in which it was transferred, has too much of villainy in it, to lay any claims to ingenuity. I am not defending the despotic government of Venice ; for I have seen too much of its effects, not to wish that it had been reformed long ago. However, the tyrannical government of a country, affords no reason for concealing any truth that regards it. Venice was at that time, in a most critical situation ; consequently, it is a fair inference, that a government so jealous, and whose police was certainly not defective in rigor, would abstain from giving offence to an hungry race of conquerors.

querors. It is therefore much more probable, that the French soldiery were performing a second edition of the scenes in the Val d' Enfer, and that when they felt the just indignation and resentment of the people, they should represent their *own story* to their commanders in a point of view highly unfavourable to the Venetians. We have also sufficient knowledge of the French character and discipline, to believe that the military were encouraged to these acts, by those who designed to make advantage of the excesses which might result from them. If this statement, be correct, we may easily account for the sequel. But even admitting this, the French are not justified in their subsequent conduct. If on the other hand, the Venetians were the aggressors, and the French resolved on reparation, they are equally culpable on this ground, because they should have confined themselves to reparation alone, not to subversion. In either case therefore, they stand self-condemned. But the mischief did not end here. They have unmasked their schemes, and given an ample com-

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mentary to a disgusted world, of the mystery of the French Revolution. After having by way of indemnity, raised a great contribution on Venice, they overturned its government, and summoned the people to set up for themselves, promising most faithfully to guaranty and protect their newly recovered liberties. The state Inquisitors were imprisoned, the Aristocracy abolished, and the Doge reduced to the rank of a Municipal Officer. Liberty and Equality were proclaimed, the seeds of insurrection were profusely scattered, and a new constitution, new laws, new habits of thinking, new manners, and no religion were planned, encouraged and recommended by the French. Thus they have bequeathed to the Emperor in his new possessions, the sources of a general depravation of morals, an indisposition to subordination, and a spirit of turbulence to watch over, to restrain and to chastise. When therefore the Apothecary* turned legislator, and all Venice was preparing to greet the halcyon day of regeneration, another contribution was de-

* Dandolo, too well known to many Englishmen.

demande by way of gratitude for the blessings which the French had conferred. While this was raising, the Arsenals were ransacked, and the City stripped of whatever wealth or ornament the French could carry away; and to complete the mockery, the Navy of Venice was seized for the purpose of carrying to Toulon, the load of pillage. It was then the minds of the Venetians were opened; and all was doubt, hesitation, suspense, and despair. They had been blessed with liberty and equality, but they perceived their patrons deprive them of the means of maintaining them; for Venice being stripped of Ships, Money and Arms presented the melancholy spectacle of a skeleton deprived of spirit and animation. It is in this empty state that the Emperor is to make his joyeuse entrée. To dissipate their anxieties, they deputed missionaries to the Conqueror of Italy to implore him in the names of Liberty and Equality to protect their country or to pronounce their sentence. But this finished son of Machiavel, this Scion of Corsica, was deaf to all their remonstrances, and

contended that he was now only a *passive* agent of the Directory. At length the treaty of Campo Formio determined the fate of Venice. The people of that country were sold and transferred like cattle from one despotism to another, by men affecting to contend for liberty. The Emperor indeed, could easily reconcile such an infamous traffic to his conscience, because he had already established the principle in the partition of Poland. But by what tergiversation of principles, by what corruption of sentiment, can republican France, defend this abominable measure? After having launched repeated anathemas against the despoilers of Poland; after having made it an argument against the powers confederated against them; they now basely sanction a principle so hostile to the tranquillity of nations, and belye in the face of Europe, the policy they affected to pursue. Throughout the whole of this black scene of iniquity, I discover the ingredients of the French character; fraud, avarice, cruelty and oppression. Injustice figures throughout the whole proceeding. They
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first *forced* a whole people to insurrection, under the sweet sound of liberty; when the government of that people was overthrown, they disarmed their own agents; and lastly, they encouraged them to insubordination, that their new master may be kept employed, and that "the tyrant's plea" may urge him to fasten them down with greater security. The Venetians have been presented with a gilded cup, but they have drank out of a poisoned chalice.

The man who is capable of defending such conduct must possess an heart of iron, and his morality must be of a nature too pliant and complaisant, to be relished by upright men. Such a being is fitted to be a man of blood, and he will defend any thing, or any persons, who assume for a motto, the name of Liberty. To me it stands in a light of undisguised atrocity; and is worthy of the dark and relentless tyrant of Capræa, I had rather said, of the sanguinary monsters who planned it. Before I quit this subject, it may be proper that I should venture an
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opinion on the probable effects of this vicious system of partition. Altho' I believe that an overruling Providence does often in mercy to mankind, produce good out of evil, yet, it is a most diabolical system for man to act upon, when he does evil that good may arise from it. For, in this instance, he impiously seats himself on the throne of Omniscience, and presumptuously arrogates to himself what belongs only to God. But if I may be allowed to flatter an humane propensity, in the humble hope that the Deity will extend his goodness to afflicted nations, by softening the hearts of their rulers, I should infer that the partition of Poland, and the transfer of Venice, may yet be attended with incalculable advantages to their inhabitants. Both nations have passed from under intolerable to tolerable governments; and tho' they have lost their names as a people, they may recover their rights as men. The Prussian and Austrian administrations are preferable to the ancient turbulent vassalage of Poland, and to the suspicious and goading aristocracy of Venice. A
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few years of tranquillity will incorporate both people with the subjects of the empires, to which they respectively belong, and consequently to a participation in their civil privileges. It is some consolation to depressed spirits, to have only one great mortal to fear, instead of several hundred petty tyrants. The remoteness of the power that rules them, will blunt its force; and the iron rod being transferred from many, to one, will weigh less heavily on their heads. To this, we may add, that it will become the interest of their sovereigns to conciliate their affections, as barriers to the ambition of feudal nobles. Commerce and a pure religion with genuine philosophy in its train, will lighten the yoke of despotism, and gradually meliorate the lot of the depressed. Whatever is gained by the original subjects, the conquered will partake of; a community of interests will soon be established, and a benevolent legislation improving with the circumstances of the times, may leave these unhappy nations, no cause to regret that they have escaped from manacles of iron, into
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filken nets.*

It is impossible for me to pourtray within the circumscribed limits of this letter, the whole series of French duplicity, as it has been displayed since I last addressed the public. I shall however slightly mention another instance of unparalleled atrocity, which has been recently perpetrated in a country, whose people I love, because of the innocence and simplicity of their lives; whose hard lot I deplore, because of their peaceful and inoffensive policy; and whose virtues I must for ever admire and acknowledge, because I have felt their benignant influence, during a long residence among them, in the happiest hours of my early youth. I allude

* Altho' Poland lost near five millions of inhabitants by the partition of 1772, yet, it should be remarked that if the Republic was a loser by this event, the peasant who ceased to be a Pole, made a great acquisition by it. For, the Emperor gave freedom to all those who before groaned under bondage in the bosom of the Republic. What a disgrace to a state, that a great part of its inhabitants find themselves benefited by becoming the subjects of another sovereign! This circumstance justifies my proposition, tho' it does not extenuate the principle.

lude to Switzerland—to that region, “where nature has carried on her operations with a bolder hand,” and to which, I can bear ample testimony, Vice has made less inroad, than in any other portion of the civilized world ;

“Among those hilly regions, where embrac’d
In peaceful vales the happy *Switzers* dwell.”

The genius of the French is indeed, more apparent in the present instance, than in the one I have selected above. It marks in more distinct and legible characters, their perfidious and ambitious system. In my former pamphlet I observed, that Switzerland, through the active mediation of M. Weiss, had maintained during the course of this war, its accustomed wise neutrality. We now find that this enlightened Patriot is among the list of those whom the French have inscribed in their sanguinary roll of proscription. However, in consequence of an old treaty framed above *two hundred years ago*, their troops advanced into the Swiss territory. Thus, that ambitious government which refused to ne-

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gociate with Lord Malmesbury on the basis of ancient treaties, or even to recognize those solemn instruments of national conventions, which have ever been deemed sacred by all civilized communities, has not hesitated, when it suited its own views, to revive a moth eaten treaty, and to make it the ground of hostile invasion, by a palpable misconstruction of its spirit, and tendency. The French Executive Directory, disclaimed the idea of being bound by the public law of its former rulers; and laid prostrate every regulation, however just, which emanated from that source. What faith therefore can be placed in the integrity, or the sincerity of such men? What security has any nation that France will observe even her own conventions? If she have not kept her word with her own people, foreign countries have no reason to hope for it. I would now ask the Directory, since they have at length agreed to acknowledge treaties made by their former sovereigns, by what treaty, by what authority, and by what tenure, they keep possession of Avignon and the Comtat

Comtat Venaissin? If treaties do not bind them in one instance, they cannot in another. The same power which formally revokes or rescinds every public act of its ancient magistracy, cannot be allowed to take advantage of a particular one, however favourable to its views. The complete rejection of the whole system of public law, precludes them from profiting by a particular part of it. But to reason, or to talk of justice before men loaded with every sort of crime, and whose hands are yet reeking with blood, is to plead the cause of mercy in a den of hungry tygers.

I will not despair of the fortunes of Switzerland. Altho' it be now marked out as the victim of the ferocious disturbers of the peace of mankind, there is much to hope from the union, virtue, and patriotism of its people. The love of country which beats high in the bosom of every good Swiss, is proverbial throughout Europe. And the pastoral song of Fatherland, will animate them, as the play of Euripides

fired the citizens of Athens in former times, to march to their frontiers, and defend their country, religion, and laws. Nature has furnished them with fortifications, superior to any of the masterpieces of Cohorn, or Vauban. Their forefathers availed themselves of this circumstance when they rescued their country, after sixty battles, from the yoke of Austria. A thousand straits of Thermopylæ, defend the entrance into a country which nature has likewise guarded by inaccessible mountains heaped on mountains, and covered with perpetual snows. It was only an handful of men that humbled the pride of Austria and of Burgundy. A more savage enemy demands again the exertion of Spartan prowess. If the Swiss be true and loyal, no one who has visited their country, can doubt of their final success, against the combined myriads of France. They may yet give a great example to Europe, and pile up whole hecatombs of their insolent invaders, in another monument of national glory.*

These

* I allude to the monument near Morat, in which the
Swiss

These are stubborn facts, which no sophistry can elude. There are, doubtless, many virtuous men in France, who view with *secret* indignation and regret, the conduct of their rulers; but I apprehend their number is but small in proportion to the rest of the community. A
general

Swiss gathered the bones of above twenty thousand Burgundians, whom they slew in battle, at a time when they endeavoured to subvert the independence of Switzerland. The Latin motto is remarkably laconic. After mentioning the Duke of Burgundy's entrance into their country, they have inscribed these words over the door of the building.

“Hoc fui monumentum reliquit.”

The building is entire, and the bones remain to this day, as far as I know, excepting one bone of a huge Burgundian, which I brought away with me. Should the marauders dare to provoke the resentment of the Swiss, I hope there will be another monument of the same sort erected on the opposite side of the Lake, in order to complete the prospect, and if a prose title will answer as well, I would recommend the following inscription,

“Hoc *fraternitatis* monumentum reliquant.”

I will here say a word on the subject of the commotions in the Pays de Vaud. The inhabitants of that dependency, were remarkable for simplicity of character, contentment, and happiness. I know that the emissaries of France have been long actively employed in poisoning their unsuspecting minds, and in disseminating their abominable principles among the happy Vaudois. At the time that General Montesquieu was before Geneva, the system of proselytism commenced, Pache
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general ignorance, barbarism, and infatuation, seem to pervade the mass of Frenchmen, who tremble more under the tyrants of the Republic, than at the nod of a solitary individual; among whom the success of military depredations extinguishes the faculty of reasoning; and who may be justly said to endure better than any other

the *cidevant* Minister of war, spared no pains nor expence in propagating the Fraternal system. Hence, a turbulent spirit quickly manifested itself in that district, and the Canton of Berne was obliged to watch the Vaudois, with a circumspective and jealous eye. It was *convenient*, however at that time that France should be on good terms with Switzerland. But when the successes of the French in Italy, emboldened their projects, they no longer hesitated to avow their pretensions, and the scheme which they had long been brooding over, burst on a sudden. Their emissaries seduced the Vaudois to call in the aid of "*the Great Nation*," against their mild and paternal government. The pretext was readily seized, and made use of; for before, notwithstanding their frequent attempts to quarrel with the Swiss, they could find no real ground of complaint. The case is literally represented in the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb. It appears that the Vaudois already begin to repent of their fatal rashness, for by the late Italian and Swiss Papers, we are informed that the *contributions* imposed by the French upon the Pays du Vaud, have caused a serious remonstrance to the Commander in chief. What was the reply of the French General?—"That no more was levied than was necessary for the maintenance of his troops, and that being expended among them, the money would again revolve to its original." Excellent! Nouvelle Systeme économique! &c. The pillage of a poor district is Fraternity à la mode de Paris.

other people, to be splendidly miserable. Happy would it have been for the repose of the world, if France had known how to distinguish between victories and advantages; or if she could be convinced that when a nation shines brightest with conquest, it may then, like a wasting taper, be only hastening to decay. Such however, is the spirit, and genius, and projects of the men who stigmatize us as pirates. They have made all the advantages that could possibly arise from their local situation, and deny to us those which naturally result from our own; advantages which could not be communicated to every power, and which, if subdivided and enjoyed by several, would be productive of endless calamities to mankind. We may therefore reply to the French in the indignant and honourable language of the Spanish minister, "I would advise you as a friend and ally, to balance the disgrace of the two nations: to take in one hand the single defeat of the arms of Spain, off the Cape of St. Vincent, while in the other you carry the various defeats and disgraces that have
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befallen the navy of the French Republic ever since the commencement of its career, and see which weighs heaviest. Your Directory will then be convinced, that for either of our two nations to attempt to bring reproach upon the other for their inferiority to the English in naval skill and courage, is nothing else than to arraign the wisdom of the ALMIGHTY POWER, *who has thought it good and proper to grant the decided superiority upon the wide and extended ocean, to that brave people.** ”

The observations which I have hitherto made, refer chiefly to the *political* conduct of the French, and to its effects. Nothing has been yet said on the subject of religion. To the narrow and
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* See “The answer of the Spanish minister to a memorial, or remonstrance, presented by Citizen Perignon, French Ambassador at Madrid, upon the defeat of the Spanish Fleet, off Cape St. Vincent, by the British Fleet.” It may not be *mal-à-propos* to insert the emphatic words with which this noble answer concludes, and which should not only be remembered by our people, but practised by our rulers.

“The KING, my master, has, in the mean time, commanded me to signify to the Members of the French Republic, that whether it be true or not, that it is the infirmity of
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contracted circle of my acquaintance, my sentiments on this important head, have been long well known. Indeed, I always considered it as a wise measure to abstain from any professions in a country, where religion reared her sacred front in the palace, and in the hamlet. But when Infidelity avowedly stalks abroad, when every fallacy is marshalled in systematic order, for the base purpose of invalidating or rendering ridiculous the great truths of religion, it is right that every man should boldly and fearlessly avow his faith. It is a duty which I owe my countrymen to caution them, against that cold and flippant scepticism, which damps our hopes, removes the sanctions of morality, chills

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Government, as they state, to be seized with certain cancers, which contaminate and corrupt the State, it is not his Majesty's intention to follow the example of degenerated France, by applying caustics and the knife to remedy that evil; for which reason, he has no occasion to suspend, even for a moment, the dictates of his paternal affection towards the subjects of his own States, which he is more than ever determined to cherish and cultivate, being firmly persuaded by his own observation, and which is confirmed to him by the historical experience of all nations, that no evil can be so great as to submit to the tyranny and oppression of a Foreign Government, nurtured and supported by the very dregs of the lower orders of society."

domestic happiness, destroys the obligation of social order, and builds up the philosophy of vanity, on the subversion of the altars of God. This however, is not the place to discuss the moral and political effects of religion on the happiness of nations. * The example of France, should serve as an awful example to Europe. The church was no sooner declared independent of the state, under the pretext of universal tolerance; than a flood of vice inundated the land. The tribunals of justice received a shock, in
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* I have examined this question elsewhere. Tho' I conceive human reason to be inadequate to the purpose of establishing a direct conviction in the mind (apart from *evidence*) yet I apprehend it will go a great way, in assisting our conclusions respecting the truth and necessity of a revealed religion. Modern Philosophers, affect to set up a new system of morality, in opposition to Christianity. Yet after all their sophistry, we discover that their systems are resolvable into the system of Christian ethics. This observation applies not to the immoral philosophy of Mr. Godwin, and his followers. I am not personally acquainted with that gentleman, nor have I any thing to assert against his private life, or his genius. But, I wish to know what determination he, or the men of his school, would form on the following case.

Mr. G. has said in *his* book of Political Justice, that marriage is a *monopoly of women*, and unjust. Notwithstanding this, he married lately, a celebrated, and I believe, most amiable woman. Suppose me one of his disciples; that
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the absence of every religious tie, and all conventions among men were weakened or rendered nugatory. That the French should turn aside from the superstitions of the Church of Rome, is a natural conclusion, in an age remarkable for the general dissemination of knowledge. But that they should suddenly renounce the acknowledgment of revealed truths, from the abuses which have oppressed them, is as ridiculous in their conduct, as it denotes the impotence of their understandings. The vices and frauds of the professors of Christianity have nothing to do with Christianity itself. To know what it *is*, we must look to the only proper place, THE SCRIPTURES. The Christian religion is peculiar to itself; it has nothing in common

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I be as "hot as the clime that gave me birth," or as Belcour says that "my passions are my masters;" that I have been a prisoner four years in the springtide of youth, and that I had sent a polite letter to Mr. G. requesting him to indulge me with the *use* of his wife—Quere, would he have accommodated me, and would his lady, or any other lady have been agreeable to it? If not what *obligation* could either party have imposed on her? A commentary on the last book of Lucretius would be an useful appendix to Mr. G—'s work.

with the other systems of religion which have existed in the world. It has God for its founder, and reason for its basis. It is every where uniform, consistent, and complete. Considered as a body of ethics, it has never been equalled, and as a revealed law, it is supported by that lucid evidence which must be satisfactory to an unbiased judgment.* Its promises are all intellectual (a remarkable instance of its simplicity) its object is unambitious, and its moral precepts correct even to mathematical precision. The law of nature was but darkly known to the most enlightened of ancient philosophers; a revelation of it was therefore indispensably necessary. Christianity supplied this defect. It descended upon the earth at a proper place and a proper time, after human philosophy had emptied itself of all its subtilities, in the most inquisitive and enlightened
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* What I mean by *evidence*, is the genuineness of the writings, and the credibility of the facts, depending on such species of assent, as we give to the name and subject matter of all ancient writings, history in particular. The ethics of the scriptures, are in all points more irrefragable than those of Aristotle or Cicero; the writers were as competent witnesses, at least, as Xenophon or Cæsar.

nations of antiquity. It has existed for eighteen centuries, throughout which we can trace its progress, without once losing sight of it; and it will exist, as long as Charity and Virtue, continue to be cultivated by men. What *can* the human moralist substitute in its place, or what hopes will he give us when Christianity is gone? It has been well answered, morality without motive, laws without mercy, and governments without principle. Virtue and Vice would become mere conventional sounds, determined according to the fashion of countries, and a man might travel from one region to another, to commit vice with impunity. Thus incest he would reconcile to conscience, by the law of Persia, adultery by that of Sparta, and the exposition of infants by the codes of Lycurgus and China. The experiment has been tried in France, and it has failed. To supply the absence of religion, terror has been resorted to, and it has been found inefficient. Nevertheless, the French continue to foster infidelity, and to proscribe the Christian faith. They have in this respect, acted

acted consistently ; because, it is by vice alone reduced into a system, that the circuit of flagitious empire can be extended. I shall dwell no longer on this subject. We are yet a religious people, and may remain such, if our *private* practice, be conformable to our *public* principle. The most important reformation which we stand in need of, is the reformation of our moral conduct. Till this is effected, every scheme of political innovation, is but an incentive to the more enlarged commission of vice ; and must therefore be condemned by every good man, as inadequate, illtimed, rash, and dangerous. The man, who in these downward times, believes in the great truths of religion, should manifest his faith by his conduct, his example, and his steadiness. Those who affect to believe, but who undisguisedly indulge in vicious propensities, give the greatest encouragement to infidelity, by weakening the reverence, which ought every where to be paid to the maxims of Christianity. The Atheist himself is not so bitter an enemy to our religion, as the believing debauchee. As I consider

consider the Christian religion, to be closely connected with the political question I have been discussing, I cannot enforce its obligations too strongly on your minds, or remind you too solemnly, that when you have abandoned it, you will not only renounce every consolation in this life of trial, but every hope of immortality in that which is to come.*

I have not adverted to many other circumstances which have disgraced the conduct of the French, neither have I noticed their treatment of the Genoese and Americans, in behalf of whom the severest censures might be properly employed.† What I intended to expose, has been done, I imagine, with sufficient precision to lead your minds into a just suspicion of the intrigues and machinations of France. Much more might have been alledged, but enough has been proved to establish the proposition with which this letter commenced ; namely, that the
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* See Note A. in the Appendix.

† See Mr. Harper's Pamphlet,

French have established slavery at home, and are striving to propagate it abroad, under the name of Liberty. It is for you to make a proper application of the arguments I have advanced, and which, in the sincerity of my soul, I recommend to your sober and serious consideration. If you place your minds into a state of indifferency, without which as Locke observes there can be no real acquisition of knowledge, and warily examine the arguments for and against the cause of France; you will doubtless conclude with me, that the French have debased, polluted, and ruined a noble cause, and that *you* are bound by every principle of religion, loyalty, and patriotism, to check their crimes, and to repel their hostile invasion.

The time for discrimination is now come. Under the idea of securing the rights of man; the religious, the moral, the civil, the intellectual rights of mankind, have been laid prostrate. The eulogist and the censurer, seldom confine themselves within the line of justice. It may
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be asserted however, without descending into flattery, that England has now more to lose than any nation in the world. We have a constitution to preserve, which the most accomplished legislators of antiquity considered as a system more to be desired, than practised; and which the concurrent testimony of modern philosophers has applauded, as a noble edifice of security and peace. We all feel its influence, and share equally in the protection it affords. The Christian Religion is incorporated into it, and learning has ever been its support.

To avert the sentence of final destruction from being executed upon England, you must strengthen the arm of government, by confidence, vigilance, and public spirit. France wishes to give encouragement to *your* views, in order to divide the country, and thereby to facilitate their entrance into it. But when their object has been attained, they will make no exception of persons; they will confound you in the common lot of the vanquished; and while they applaud the dis-

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affection, they will severely treat the disaffected. You have therefore no hope of safety, but within the ancient and hallowed Palladium of British Liberty. For the time is indeed come, when *every inferior consideration must yield to the security of the sovereign, and to the general safety of the state.*

Great Britain has nothing to apprehend from the embattled hosts of France, if her people be united and firm. Our fleets, notwithstanding their pre-eminence in valour and skill, are not alone competent to illustrate her independence. Her soldiers have ever distinguished themselves by their heroism and prowess, and they ardently desire an occasion to display their fidelity and patriotism. The numbers of the enemy afford no argument against the probability of our final success; for in the last century, Sir William Petty, rightly observed, that if all the inhabitants of Ireland and Scotland, were transplanted into England, and those countries were to be afterwards swallowed up by the sea,

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the nation would be a gainer by it. He spoke well. It is not necessary to independence, that it should be guarantied by extended empire; it is in the hearts and unanimity of the *whole* people, that it finds its true resource. This is an extraordinary conjuncture, in which the public danger becomes the public security; when religion and policy, conscience and interest, unite their powers to support the authority of the prince, and to give fidelity, vigour, and activity, to the obedience of the subject.

The nation only requires to be made sensible of its danger, and its exertions will be adequate to every emergency. The other states of Europe seem to be stunned with the din of French armies, and they appear to be taking no efficient precautions to avert the blow that is meditated against them. On the contrary, they seem to await their sentence in humble expectation. To Britain is reserved the high destiny of rescuing the civilized world, from atheism, vice, and barbarism; and the noble office which she has often

exercised of punishing the oppressor. If Great Britain, through the treasonable baseness of her own subjects were to fall a prey to Gallic ambition (and by no other means can she be overwhelmed in the general ruin) the hopes of every friend to reason, liberty, and humanity, will be at once dissipated; for the cause of literature, science, virtue, are all become her cause, and must share in the varieties of her fate. Let us ever keep in our minds, the bitter fruits which the dissenters reaped from the troubles which they excited in Poland.* Before these troubles, they enjoyed the free exercise of their religion; but the grand object of their desires was to be admitted into the diets. However, after having brought foreign troops into the kingdom, after having involved their country in all the horrors of civil war; after having proved the occasion of part of their fellow subjects being subjected to the dominion of three powerful enemies,† they were themselves disappointed of the advantage they expected to derive from their measures. What

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* In 1772.

† Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

a lesson does this afford to our people ! No, let us never call in our ambitious neighbours to profit by our divisions ; and after finding their way into our country, under the character of friends and brethren, to establish themselves in it as our masters.

Let us no longer be deceived by visionary projects of perfection, nor by the delusive promises of men, who falsely call themselves philosophers. Let us not arrogantly mark out for ourselves a little Goshen of intellectual light ; beyond which every thing is to be deemed error, prejudice, and slavery. It comes not within the lot of any being, individual or politic, to be perfect. A moral reformation should at all events precede the political. Till this shall have happened, no real benefit can flow from the extension of the elective franchise, or the limitation of the duration of parliament. It might be appealing only from one set of corrupt men to another set of the same description ; not from Philip drunk to Philip sober ; but from Philip drunk
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drunk to day, to Philip drunk tomorrow.*

I have now done. By thus openly declaring my sentiments, I may incur blame or excite malevolence; but my motive in writing this letter is sufficiently manifest. It is my wish to see the religion, laws and constitution of my country preserved entire, from the fury of a perfidious enemy, or the rash arm of fanatical innovation.† My principles, religious and political, are certainly different from what they were when I entered the prison. I am prepared, if it be necessary, to explain the causes of that change. I solemnly declare that I have nothing to hope from any party; from ministers or from opposition. I am totally unconnected with either. Altho' I have deeply and severely suffered from long imprisonment, both in fortune, and domestic

* A virtuous people cannot have too much power; a vicious people cannot have too little. I recommend the following Speech of Baileul in the Council of 500, to the consideration of *parliamentary* reformers of every description. "You know that in Germinal last, *tradesmen to please their employers were obliged to vote in their favour*"!!! See the Star, Evening Paper, Feb. 28, 1798.

† See Note B. in the Appendix.

domestic happiness, and altho' I have been invited to repair the mischiefs, by entering again on political engagements, yet I will not sacrifice my future tranquillity to temporary advantages, nor my opinions to interest. If through me, the country have been wounded, I implore its forgiveness, and sincerely pray that the evils which may arise from any misconduct of mine, may light on my head, not on Great Britain; and that in Charity to the failings of human nature, it may be ascribed to the levity and inconsiderateness of youth,* not to any dishonesty of intention, nor defect of principle. If for such opinions, I am destined, in an ill-fated hour of my country, to be led to the scaffold, I shall willingly resign my life, in testimony of a constitution, the beneficent effects of which, I have felt even in the melancholy solitude of a prison.

* I was only *twenty two* years of age when I was first imprisoned, and have remained nearly four years in custody.

FINIS.

Appendix.

Note A. Page 79.

MANY persons being at a loss what books to read in order to establish their belief in Christianity, I have subjoined a list of such books as appear to me admirably adapted to that purpose. Having studied them often of late, I can venture to advise the order in which they should be read; prefixing such authors as have treated on the existence and providence of God, the idea of which being firmly settled in the mind, Christianity follows as a necessary consequence.

Locke's Essay on the human Understanding, b. 4, c. 10. Whitehurst's Theory of the Earth, Bonnycastle's or Ferguson's Astronomy, or any other author who treats of the works of nature, Wollaston's Religion of Nature, Burlamaqui's Natural Law, Butler's Analogy, Soame Jenyn's View of the internal evidence of the Christian Religion, Beattie on the Evidences, &c. Watson's Apology for the Bible in answer to Paine, and his apology for Christianity in answer to Gibbon, Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul, West on the Resurrection, Paley's Evidences, &c. Addison's ditto, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical history, and to crown the whole, David Hartley on the Evidences, and Grotius on the Truth of the Christian Religion. The reader who wishes to examine further, may consult Watson's Theological Tracts (at the end of which is a Catalogue of Authors proper to be read) and the writings of Leland and Lardner.

Note B. Page 86.

The English constitution arises entirely out of the Feudal System; to which the intelligent reader should resort. The following books may be read in the order in which they are here put down, and they will give a very good idea of our Constitution. Robertson's history of Charles. V. vol. 1. Stuart's View of Society in Europe, Squire on the Anglo-Saxon Government, Dalrymple on Feudal Property, Wright's Tenures, York's Confid. on the Law of Forfeiture, Sullivan's Lectures on the Constitution, &c. Hale's History of Common Law, Millar's hist. View of the English Government, N. Bacon's ditto, Fortescue de. land. leg. Ang. and on monarchy, Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. 1. 3. and 4. Whitlock on the King's Writ, The chap. of Dr. Henry's history of England which treat on the Constitution, Hume's history of England particularly the appendices, Rapin's history of Ch. 2. The Parliamentary history, and State Trials, Ellys on spirit, and temp. liberty, De. Lolme on the constitution. Two hours a day spent in this study, and two hours on sundays in the study of the books in the preceding Note, will effectually cure infidelity and democracy.

